

Sound Doctrine:
Essential Elements
Of the Pentecostal Faith
For Planting Churches
By
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The title of this chapter expresses a concern to identify the “essential elements” of the Pentecostal Faith, with the implied intent that these must be protected and passed on in the process of planting church and in helping future generations to become victorious, Pentecostal Christians.

The first thing that we need to do is to define the concept of “essential elements”. In other words, what do we mean when we say that something is an essential element of something else? Do we mean that it is analogous to the oxygen in water (H₂O), that is, if the oxygen is removed, what remains is hydrogen and not water? If so, then an essential element is that without which the larger whole loses its identity. Or is an essential element to be thought of more like a member of an organic body? If so, then a distinction has to be made between that part which is essential to the life of the organism and that part which is essential to its wholeness? Or is there a third possibility, that the Pentecostal Faith is a spiritual reality, composed of essential elements, incarnate in a specific, concrete, historical context, composed of elements which are optional, cultural and historical?

I would suggest that there are dimensions of truth in all of these paradigms. There are definitely elements of Pentecostalism which are cultural manifestations and not of the essence of the faith. There are other elements which are genuine and legitimate, but not absolutely essential to survival. And there are other elements, without which the Pentecostal Faith would be less than, and other than, what it is. But before we pursue the question of what the essential elements are, let us ask, ‘What is the Pentecostal Faith?’

We, Pentecostals, have always maintained that the Pentecostal Faith is the faith of the Apostles and all those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit on that first Day of Pentecost in Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles. We have understood that the Pentecostal Faith is the New Testament faith and that it continued in the earliest Church and that it persisted, although in a weakened and diminished form, in most ages of the church. I am also convinced that the historic faith of the church as expressed throughout the ages in the Apostles’ Creed is integral to, but not the totality of, Pentecostal Faith., because Pentecostal Faith is more than the intellectual assent of creedal faith.

The famous Jewish scholar, Martin Buber, in his book, *Two Types of Faith*, sets forth two paradigms: one of “faith in...” and the other of “faith that...”¹ The first of

¹ Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 177pp.

these two, viz., “faith in” or trust in the living God, he sought to identify as Jewish faith and the second, viz., “faith that” or a statement of right belief and teaching, he sought to identify with Christian faith as expressed in the creeds of the Church. I believe that he gave us two useful and legitimate paradigms which can serve us well as Pentecostals, but that he failed to see that they are linked together and indeed that they are complementary, because faith in the living God demands statements of affirmations concerning God. It involves saying “Yes” to that which is true and saying “No” to that which is false.² And this is just as true in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament.³

Pentecostal Faith demands, first of all, a full-orbed expression of a living faith in God, which includes walking (/living) in obedience to God, and then it demands a declaration or confession of faith which says “Yes” to Biblical truth and “sound doctrine” and which says “No” to doctrinal error and false doctrine.

This may sound strange in the light of the strong opposition to “creeds” which existed in the early days of our movement. R. G. Spurling, Jr. was insistent in his opposition to creeds, but what he says seems to be directed against the misuse of creeds. They were, he said, based on the “commandments of men” and resulted in having more authority than the Word. He does not envision a creed as an instrument for confessing faith in God or one for setting forth sound doctrine.

Yet as early as 1910 Spurling, along with three others, sat on a committee to draw up a list of the “Teachings Made Prominent” by the Church with supporting Biblical references. This document was produced as a guideline for those who were preparing to be examined candidates for the ministry.⁴ Since a Christian is to believe the whole Bible, the “Teaching Made Prominent” was intended to be an abbreviated index, not to explain the doctrine, but to show where it is set forth in the Scriptures.

² See Karl Barth, *Credo* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936), p. 6.

³ In the OT, e.g.: The LORD is the eternal God (“from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God” Ps 90:2) and the Creator of all things (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” Gn 1:1), who redeemed Israel (“I am the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” Ex 20:2) and made a covenant with them (“the LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb” Dt 5:2). He is not like the gods of the nations; He cannot be contained in a house made with hands, etc. Thus we see that there is definitely a “faith that” dimension in the Old Testament, although the scribes and rabbis lifted up and codified the commandments as expressions of obedience to “faith in” God. They called this area of teaching “Halakah” or “How to Walk/Live”.

And in the NT: Likewise the faith of the New Testament finds expression as both “faith in” and “faith that”. This can be illustrated from one writer, John, e.g., (1) “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16) and (2) “These (things) are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., the Messiah), the Son of God, and that (through) believing you may have life in His name” (Jn 20:31). In other words a “faith in” implies a “faith that”; we believe in one about whom we believe that He is the Sent One from the Father. Believing that He was or is anything less would not merit believing in Him.

⁴ It is interesting that our sister organization, the Assemblies of God, had to define its doctrine of God against a form of unitarianism which arose very soon after organizing in 1914. Thus we see that both of these Pentecostal movements found it necessary, very early in their existence, to define the “faith that” of each movement in a formal statement.

Let us now consider the early church for some guidance. The gospel which the early church proclaimed was the good news that the Eternal God, who had promised to send redemption, had acted and sent His Son to die for all as the Savior of the world. God loved the world and gave His Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. To believe (or to have faith) means that a person, after hearing of God's love and the gift of His Son on our behalf, opens his or her heart and receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This is called 'faith' or 'turning to God.' The other side of faith (or turning) is repentance, the turning from sin and rebellion. The Holy Spirit is the one who shows us both our Savior and our sin and enables us to turn.

This declaration of good news is joined to three commandments (verbs in the imperative): repent,⁵ believe and be baptized. When a person repents and believes, he or she is, then, baptized. Part of that ceremony is the profession of faith, the speaking forth, i.e., the testimony of the person being baptized and the affirmation that Jesus is Lord. This is focused on the moment of surrender and the acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, i.e., when one said for the first time, "I believe!" After baptism and reception as members of the church, that person will say, jointly with the church, "We believe!"

This process may have been at first in the form of answers to three questions: (1) "Have you placed your faith in the true and living God?" (2) "And in Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior?" (3) "And in the Holy Spirit?" And this was probably reduced to the simple statement, "I believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit." In the process of time appositions and "that" clauses were added and the Apostles' Creed was produced. This served as a liturgical instrument through which the church could confess, in a public and corporate act, the Christian faith as both a living faith and a statement of correct doctrine.

The content of the faith (or correct doctrine) as stated in the Apostles' Creed can be summarized as follows:

- I. God the Father is
 - Almighty and
 - Maker of heaven and earth.
- II. Jesus Christ is
 - God's Only Begotten Son and
 - Our Lord:
 - 1. He was
 - Conceived of the Holy Spirit and
 - Born of the Virgin Mary;
 - 2. He suffered under Pontius Pilate:
 - He was crucified, dead and buried;
 - 3. He descended into hell;
 - He rose from the dead on the third day.

⁵ Until one sees (understands) the "bad" news of one's sin and damnation, there is no "good" news of forgiveness.

4. He ascended into heaven:
He sits at the right hand
Of God the Father Almighty;
 5. He shall come to judge
The living and the dead.
- III. The Holy Spirit (and: the...)
1. Christian Church:
The holy, universal church and
The communion of saints
 2. Christian Experience:
The forgiveness of sins
 3. Christian Hope:
The resurrection of the body and
Eternal life

Apart from this baptismal profession which was turned into confession of faith, there existed from the earliest time, what C. H. Dodd called the “the teaching” (Greek: *Didache*), which Paul refers to as “How to Walk and Please God.”⁶ Dodd reconstructs the teaching from the instructions and imperatives in the epistles and the sermons in Acts. This kind of teaching has always been important where Christians have sought to love God, to do His will and to live for His glory. A life of obedience is absolutely necessary for the Christian believer, who by the grace of God and a faith response has become a child of the Heavenly Father, a disciple and servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and the instrument and channel of the Holy Spirit.

Later the creed was expanded to say “No” to false teachings and to state the “Yes” of the church, as a correction to the error. It was out of this process of defining the position of the church and negating heresy that theology arose, resulting, it seems to me, from the interaction of two things: (1) the questioning mind of Greek philosophy, which had developed, to a high degree, the reasoning and ordering powers of the human mind and (2) the “faith that” statements of Scripture. This had already been intimated in the instruction of Peter, that his readers should be “ready to give an answer to everyone for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).⁷

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Now let us look at the early history of the Church of God. In the General Assembly of 1913, R. G. Spurling, Jr. preached a sermon on the church and used three charts to illustrate it. The first sets forth three things from left to right: (1) the Cross representing the doctrine of redemption; (2) the house of Christian experience: with the first, second and third floors labeled Regeneration, Sanctification and the Fullness of the Holy Spirit; and (3) the foursquare city representing the Church. A path connects the Cross to the house of Christian experience, which is butted up against the walls of the Holy City or the Church. His second chart shows the harlot of the Book of the Revelation, seated on the seven-headed beast, which in his sermon is the church gone

⁶ C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching, Three Lectures* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 96 pp. and *Gospel and Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 83 pp.

⁷ As the church drifted away from early Christian experience and the Apostles’ doctrine, its errors, of course, fed into the creeds and the statements of theology which were then produced.

astray. The third chart depicts the Railway to Heaven on two golden rails, which Spurling interprets as the two great commandments of Jesus, viz., love of God and love of neighbor. The chart shows the engine on the rails at the left of the chart. In the center there is a maze of narrow gage rails in disorder, which represent man-made creeds. On the right of the chart the two golden rails of love protrude. The point of the sermon was the need of church to recover its purpose, in order to make its way into the future in accordance with the will of God. Implicit in the sermon is the fact that Christian experience grows out of doctrine and is, in turn, the door of entrance into the Christian life, i.e., participation in the life of the church.

The first issue of the *Evangel* had appeared in March of 1910, and the issue on August 15 (following that) was dedicated to the doctrines of the Church of God. A list, entitled *Church of God Teachings*, which was the work of a committee composed of M. S. Lemons, R. G. Spurling, Jr., T. L. McLain and A. J. Tomlinson, was published in that issue of the *Evangel*. It was prefaced by these words:

TEACHINGS

The Church of God stands for
The whole Bible rightly divided.
The New Testament is
The only rule for government and discipline.

These teachings say nothing about the Bible, the Doctrine of God (Trinity), the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Church, etc., i.e., the whole range of Christian Theology. But rather they are centered on Christian experience, the Christian life and the Christian hope. I had always assumed that the list had no particular organization; and I have never heard anything to the contrary. But, early in my ministry, I began to wonder if there was not an order to the sequence of the presentation of the various items.⁸ It seems to me that the twenty-five numbered items of teaching fall into two sections consisting of four parts in each, as follows:

A. Pentecostal Experience:

The Beginning the Christian Life.

I. Conversion (Salvation or Getting Saved)

1. Repentance
[Mk 1:15; Lk 13:3; Ac 3:19]
2. Justification
[Ro 5:1; Tit 3:7]
3. Regeneration
[Tit 3:5]
4. New Birth
[Jn 3:3; 1 Pt 1:23; 1 Jn 3:9]

⁸ In Haiti, in the 1950s I printed our teaching in such an order.

II. Sanctification

5. Sanctification subsequent to Justification
[Ro 5:2; 1 Co 1:30; 1 Th 4:3; Hb 13:12]
6. Holiness
[Lk 1:75; 1 Th 4:7; Hb 12:14].

III. Water Baptism

7. Water baptism
[Mt 28:19; Mk 1,9f; Jn 3:22f; Ac 8:36,38]

IV. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

8. Baptism in the Holy Spirit,
subsequent to cleansing:
the enduement of power for service.
[Mt 3:11; Lk 24:49,53; Ac 1:4-8]
9. The Speaking in Tongues
as the Spirit gives utterance
as the initial evidence
of baptism in the Holy Spirit.
[Jn 15:16; Ac 2:4; 10:44ff; 19:1-7]

B. Pentecostal Spirituality: Continuing the Christian Life.

I. The Inner Reality of Pentecostal Spirituality

10. Spiritual Gifts [
1 Co 12:1,7-10,28,31; 14:1]
11. Signs following believers [
Mk 16:17-20; Ro 15:18f; Hb 2:4]
12. Fruit of the Spirit
[Ro 6:22; Ga 5:22f; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11]
13. Divine Healing
Provided for all in the atonement
[Ps 103:3; Is 53:4f; Mt 8:17; Ja 5:14-16;
1 Pt 2:24]

II. Some Outward Aspects Of Pentecostal Spirituality

14. The Lord's Supper
[Lk 22:17-20; 1 Co 11:23-26]
15. Washing the saints' feet
[Jn 13:4-17; 1 Tm 5:9f]
16. Tithing and giving
[Gn 14:18-20; 28:20ff; Mal 3:10;

Lk 11:42; 1 Co 9:6-9; 16:2; Hb7:1-21]

17. Restitution where possible
[Mt 3:8; Lk 19:8f]

III. The Christian Hope and the End

18. Premillennial second coming of Jesus.
First, to resurrect the dead saints
and to catch away the living saints
to Him in the air.
[1 Co 15:32; 1 Th 4:15ff; 2 Th 2:1]
Second, to reign on the earth
a thousand years.
[Zech 14:4; 1 Th 4:14; 2 Th1:7-10;
Jude 14f; Rv 5:10; 19:11-21; 20:4-6]
19. Resurrection
[Jn 5:28f; Ac 24:15; Rv 20:5f]
20. Eternal life for the righteous.
[Mt 25:46; Lk 18:30; Jn 10:28; Ro 6:22;
1 Jn 5:11ff]
21. Eternal punishment for the wicked.
No liberation or annihilation.
[Mt 25:41-46; Mk 3:29; 2 Th 1:8f;
Rv 20:10-15; 21:8]

IV. Some Practical Commitments

22. Total abstinence from all liquor
or strong drinks
[Prov 20:1; 23:29-32; Is 28:7; 1 Co 5:11;
6:10; Ga 5:21]
23. Against the use of tobacco in any form,
opium, morphine, etc.
[Is 55:2; 1 Co 10:31f; 2 Co 7:1; Eph 5:3-8;
Ja 1:21]
24. Meats and drinks (Yes! We do!)
[Ro 14:2-17; 1 Co 8:8; 1 Tm 4:1-5]
25. The Sabbath (No! We do not!)
[Hos 2:11; Ro 14:5f; Co 2:16f; Ro 13:1f]⁹

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The Declaration of Faith was put together in 1948 in Birmingham by the following committee, which was called the "Articles of Faith Committee": James L. Slay,

⁹ A brief and simple commentary on this list of teachings is appended to this document.

Chairman, Earl P. Paulk, Sr., Glenn C. Pettyjohn, J. L. Goins, James A. Cross, R. P. Johnson, R. C. Muncy, and E. M. Ellis.¹⁰

According to Slay, the chairman, the work on the Declaration of Faith was done in “my hotel room at the Moulton Hotel in Birmingham. We had no other information but what was in our heads.”¹¹ The document which they prepared consisted of a bringing together and a slight amplification of most of the 1910 Teachings (the so-called practical commitments were felt to be of a different order, apparently) with the addition of three items: (1) an article on the verbal inspiration of the Bible, (2) an article on the Trinity and (3) and an article on Jesus Christ. All three of these are influenced by the Declaration of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals, which had been adopted in 1943 in Chicago (Earl P. Paulk, Sr. was one of the Church of God delegates at that meeting). And the third article of both Declarations is almost word-for-word from the Apostles’ Creed. And the addition of the word, bodily, before resurrection in article 14 is an echo of the phrase the resurrection of the body in the Apostles’ Creed.

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Now for some conclusions: What are the essential elements of the Pentecostal faith? My conclusions are:

1. The Verbal Inspiration of the Bible.
[Without this we shall loose our mooring.]
2. The Doctrine of the Trinity.
3. The Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ.
4. The Incorporating Experiences:
Salvation, Sanctification,
Water Baptism and
Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
5. Living the Life:
The Cultivation of Pentecostal Spirituality,
Both inner and outer aspects
[Emphasizing prayer and
Reading of the Word]
Balancing hope [and service]
As we live holy lives.
6. [The Church (as it is called to be)
One, Holy, Apostolic, and Universal church.]

Although the Church of God did not make an official statement on the church until 1998,¹² our history emphasizes it:

1. The name ‘Christian Union’ calls our attention to the fact that the church is called
 - (1) to be one and
 - (2) to be based on Christ (the solid Rock);

¹⁰ See 1948 General Assembly Minutes, p.31.

¹¹ From a letter from James L. Slay to the author.

¹² And then it was simply “The Church” with a list of Bible references.

2. The name ‘Holiness Church’ points out that the church is called to holiness;
3. The name, ‘Church of God’, together with our emphasis on ‘Baptism in the Holy Spirit’ emphasize that the church is called to be apostolic;
4. And through our missions thrust and our concern for internationalization we recognize that the church is called to be universal.

Our mandate, as I hear it from the Word and from the Spirit, is to live the life and to proclaim the Word. Nothing else will cause others to receive the Word and make it a part of their lives.¹³

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A Brief Commentary on the Teachings

Let us look briefly at the Teachings in the light of this outline.

A. Pentecostal Experience: Beginning the Christian Life.

The first teaching is just one word, Repentance (with no explanation of what it means), but the meaning is clearly stated in the latter-amplified statement in the Declaration of Faith (1948): 4. ‘That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.’ This is the gospel command, “Repent and believe”; because the two always go together, or maybe we should say, that one is always incomplete without the other. When the Word comes in the power of the Spirit, commanding the hearer to turn “to God from idols” (1 Th 1:9), the heart, if it is willing, turns to God (this is faith). But the other side of that turning is ‘turning from idols’ (repentance). Both of the se are part of the same turning. The conviction of the Holy Spirit brings sorrow for sin. This was such a reality in the early days of the church, that “dry-eyed” repentance was not trusted.

The lifting of the burden of condemnation and the forgiveness of sins result in Justification and Regeneration or New Birth. These are all biblical terms referring to different aspects of salvation or conversion. Justification is a legal term and a favorite word of the Apostle Paul. It refers to vindication at the bar of justice, due to the price already paid by Jesus Christ; and it means, as Paul states, that “there is therefore now no condemnation” (Rom 8:1).

Regeneration and New Birth are, respectively, the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon terms for the same thing, viz., receiving eternal life. Whoever believes (repents and commits oneself to the Lord) in made a new creature, is born of the Spirit, receives eternal life and becomes a son or daughter of the Heavenly Father. As later expanded in the Declaration of Faith, We believe that justification, regeneration and the new birth are

¹³ See 1 Th 1:6J-8 (note the sequence): (1) receive the Word, (2) become imitators, (3) become examples, and (4) sound forth the Word. And Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount (6:33) to make this our priority in life: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteous” which translates as surrender to God and let Him be our King and then to do what is right or just (i.e., what is pleasing to Him).

wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus we see that Christian experience is based on the doctrine of the atoning death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

II. Sanctification

Again we have a linguistic consideration in the English language, viz., that sanctification and holiness in English use different stems, again from Latin and Anglo-Saxon, to talk about the same thing.¹⁴ The intent of these is amplified in the Declaration of Faith:

6. We believe in sanctification
Subsequent to the new birth,
Through faith in the blood of Christ,
Through the Word, and by the Holy Spirit.
7. We believe holiness to be
God's standard of living for His people.

As far as I can tell, the 1910 teachings on Sanctification and Holiness are based squarely on Wesleyan teaching, which reached the members of the committee through the Holiness Movement. And they are re-enforced by the teaching of the Azusa Street Revival. However, by 1948 when the Declaration of Faith was adapted there was, according to a letter received from the chairman of the committee, James L. Slay, a strong difference of opinion as to whether sanctification was a second, definite 'work of grace' or not.

But the first believers in the mountains had experienced the holiness revival; they had come into the experience of sanctification, through which they had been delivered from bondage and habits which had persisted after they were converted or saved and through which they had experienced abiding and abounding joy. The experience and the lifestyle which followed had won for each of them the label of "old sanky" (a pejorative term derived from the word, "sanctified"). For my part, I believe that they did indeed receive a true understanding from God, and that is, that the eternal, holy God can break the fetters that bind the human soul and release one into the "glorious liberty" of the children of God.

Forgiveness brings pardons and removal of the sins of the past; and sanctification is setting the prisoner free. The new Christian has a new Lord and it is Jesus and not sin.

III. Water Baptism

The order of the Teachings at this point almost seems to be an echo of the words of Peter on the Day of Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized... and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" [Acts 2:38], since in both instances water baptism is placed after

¹⁴ This is not the case in French and Spanish, both of which I have used for over a half century.

repentance and before reception of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ The listing in the Evangel had read Water Baptism by immersion, but in the following Assembly the words, “by immersion” were dropped, not because there was any quarrel with the mode, but because the terminology itself was not found in Scripture. However, this was reinserted and the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19 was specified in Article No. 10 of the Declaration of Faith, which reads, “We believe in water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The word for “baptize” in the Greek text means “to dip” and this was perfectly clear in ‘proselyte baptism’ for the non-Jew., because the water had to get to every part of the body of the person being baptized.

IV. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

First, two words about terminology: (1) it seems to me that we would do well to standardize our terminology as “baptized in the Holy Spirit.” This implies a baptizer, i.e., Jesus. When we say “Baptism of the Holy Spirit: or “baptized with the Holy Spirit” the connection to Jesus is not as clear. This way of stating also follows the explicit Greek terminology in the words of John the Baptist concerning Jesus and best fits the contrast of baptism “in” water and “in” the Holy Spirit, which the Gospel of John also uses and (2) the term, “Holy Spirit,” is, of course, the same as “Holy Ghost,” which was an archaic term even in 1611, when the King James Version was translated.¹⁶ It is interesting to note that in the New Testament we find “the Spirit” or “the Spirit of God”, but never the “Ghost” or “the Ghost of God”.

In these two Teachings it is stated that (1) Baptism in the Holy Spirit is the ‘endowment’ of power (i.e., to be clothed with power [the Holy Spirit] and to be invested with authority [the Name of Jesus]), (2) Baptism in the Holy Spirit is subsequent to cleansing, and (3) that, according to Acts 2:4, the sign or the evidence of tBaptism in the Holy Spirit is “speaking in tongues” as the Spirit gives one the ability to do so. This is the cardinal doctrine of the Pentecostal Movement and the keystone of the Pentecostal faith. If this experience and this doctrine are ever lost, the Church of God will be a different church.

B. Pentecostal Spirituality: Continuing the Christian Life

Up through No. 9, the Teachings address the beginnings of the spiritual life. No. 10 and following address the continuation of the Christian Life, in terms of Pentecostal Spirituality.

I. The Inner Reality of Pentecostal Spirituality

¹⁵ However, there are many instances of people being baptized in the Holy Spirit before being baptized in water. The household of Cornelius is an example in the New Testament.

¹⁶ But the use of the term in the King James Version has kept the expression alive for four hundred years!

The exercise of spiritual gifts is the hallmark of Pentecostalism and the most distinctive feature of Pentecostal worship. "Signs Following" should be expected as the confirming act of God in Pentecostal evangelism and missions [Mk 16:20]. The fruit of the Spirit is what the Spirit does in us, as He molds us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This must always be a primary concern for all Pentecostals. Sometimes this can be lost sight of, as it was in Corinth, in our preoccupation with the gifts of the Spirit understood as what the Spirit does through us.

Divine healing is not the same as faith healing or mental healing. As the terminology indicates, God is the healer and He gets the glory. This teaching affirms that divine healing is provided for all in the atonement. Just as salvation is provided for all, so is healing. And just because we do not see every person for whom we pray healed, we must not set aside belief in divine healing. God does not change and He is sovereign. Prayer for the sick and miracles of divine healing must always have a place among us.

II. Some Outward Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality

Just as water baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the Christian faith and the means of pledging allegiance and loyalty to the Lord and His people, so the Lord's Supper and the washing of the saints' feet are ongoing sacraments of the Christian life and the means by which one renews one's covenant with, and commitment to, both God and His people.

While tithing and giving are not made legalistically binding for membership in the Church of God, they are not optional in the Christian life. These acts of giving are a solemn and sacred recognition of the sovereignty of God over the life of the Christian. It is recognition, as the Word says, that "All things come from You, and it is from what is Yours that we give back to You."

Restitution speaks of making things right, whenever and wherever possible. At first, it could appear that this teaching is misplaced and that it should follow Repentance; because, when people are really under conviction, making restitution is part of their repentance and making things right with God. Years ago, it was not unusual for a person to get up from the altar, converted, and go to someone to make restitution. All of this applies, but the position of this teaching points even further. All along our Christian walk and warfare, we have to make things right. It is another sign that Jesus Christ is Lord and that we are His servants.

III. The Christian Hope and the End

Teachings 18-21 tell us that Jesus is coming and that when He comes, we, God's People, the dead and the living, shall be resurrected and caught up to be with Him. Then the groaning of creation in us will be over and we will enjoy life in resurrected bodies forever. In the meantime, we must remember that we have been saved to serve

the true and living God and to wait for his Son from heaven [1 Th 1:9f]. In love we serve but we need hope to inspire us in our serving.

These four teachings also echo the second half of John 3:16, that whosoever surrenders and puts their trust in Him shall never perish but have everlasting life. Thus they also remind us that there are two destinies: eternal life or eternal punishment.

IV. The Practical Commitments

The last four items of the 1910 list were finally given the name of practical commitments. They were expanded little by little until there were thirteen (13) items and they were replacing by the new document on Practical Commitments. The original four are listed above in the outline.

The first two of these are prohibitions against the use of alcohol and the use of tobacco and drugs. These have been a part of the consensus of the Church of God from the earliest days. When the Church took a stand on these issues, it was not that popular among other Christians and there was almost no scientific data on the destructiveness of these things on the human body and especially the lungs. Today alcohol and drugs, including tobacco, are two of the most destructive problems facing society.

The last two teachings in this list were, and still are, anti-Adventist. They were short and cryptic and not really clear to an outsider, although all of us on the inside knew that we were not bound by dietary laws about meats and drinks and that we did not observe Saturday as the Sabbath. Both of these had to do with Christian liberty and negating the binding power of the old covenant for believers today who live under the new covenant.

These two teachings were expanded and elaborated in 1966, after the leaders of the Church of God in South America suggested it. Later this whole section was absorbed into the new document on the Practical Commitments.

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The “Teaching Made Prominent” was produced by the committee appointed to draw up guidelines (1) to help those preparing to be examined for ordination and (2) to help those examining the candidates for ordination. The committee reported and the report was accepted but the report itself was not listed in the minutes of 1910. During the year it was published as a pamphlet and was presented to the following assembly, slightly amended and published in the minutes of 1911. But the history goes back before that.¹⁷

Tomlinson was baptized in the Holy Spirit in January of 1908. After much travel and ministry that summer, he returned to Cleveland and started a tent revival that was

¹⁷ See my “Church of God Declaration of Faith: A History” in James M. Beaty, *A Pentecostal Teaching Catechism of the Christian Faith / Church of God Declaration of Faith: A History* (Cleveland: Church of God Department of Adult Discipleship, 2020).

greatly blessed of the Lord. It produced two results: (1) a lot of people were gloriously saved, sanctified and baptized in the Holy Spirit and (2) a lot of people got mad. In 1909 he planned a similar intermarry. But when he got back to Cleveland, at the end of the summer, and sent up the tent, there was immediate opposition. And (1) court action was filed against Tomlinson and Bryant, (2) The meeting was closed after ten days, and (3) Tomlinson and Bryant were left with the court case pending. The court asked that they be prepared to tell the court what they were preaching and why they were acting like they were acting, i.e., boisterous, etc.

So Tomlinson prepared a document that was entered into the court record, listing what they preached, beginning with “repentance.” After each heading, he copied the full text from Scripture and put the citation. This was submitted to the court in August of 1909 and the General Assembly was in January of 1910.

This shows that our Church of God “Teachings” grew out of church planting. It would also be beneficial to point out that most of the teachings in Christianity have an imperative dimension that goes back to Jesus, Himself, who said, “If you love me, keep my commandments!” Also, let us look again at the great commission in Matthew: (1) Make disciples [You proclaim the Word, they respond and I do the transformation], then (2) baptize them (and let each one, by that act, make a public statement that “Now, I am a Christian” and pledge his or her loyalty to Jesus), and then (3) “teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.”

May the Lord give each of us the wisdom and the power to do His will and to keep our eyes on Him. And remember: one day every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess, that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father!” Amen.

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